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Empowering Our Ministry: Contested Ground

Luke 8:26-39

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- **This passage comes in a section of four stories that deal with Jesus demonstrating power**
  - **Jesus calms the storm**
  - **Jesus casts out demons and brings healing (and wholeness) to a man**
  - **Jesus heals a woman with a hemorrhage**
  - **Jesus heals the daughter of Jairus**

- **The next section after these four has Jesus giving authority and power to the disciples**
  - **So that they will go out and do what he has been doing**
- **Namely:**
  - **preaching the kingdom of God (reconciliation with the Father)**
  - **demonstrating the kingdom of God (signs and wonders, healing, casting out demons)**

- **Luke shares the story because his readers were to understand that authority and power was accessible to them as well as to the original disciples and if to them, then authority and power is accessible to us as well**

- **That is, we have the capability to do what Jesus did, to bring the full presence of the kingdom of God to bear in our world today**

- **And the need has never been greater:**
  - **Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, they 'fell from grace,' we call it the Fall**
  - **All the effects of the Fall have not been removed from the redeemed (Christians)**
  - **While the kingdom of God is powerfully present it is not fully present**
  - **We live in a fallen world that is largely controlled by the demonic**
  - **The 'prince of this world' is Satan, and his minions are demons AKA evil spirits**
    - **Even the creation groans for redemption - our relationships are broken - and the very ground of our world has been his, uncontested but for the sole Hebrew people who themselves often went away from Yahweh God**
- **The devil seeks to humiliate the Lord Jesus Christ through those who believe in Him**
- **Thus we are often oppressed by the demonic**
  - **We cannot be completely possessed if we have the Holy Spirit within (if we are Christians) but we can be oppressed, especially if we give access to evil**
- **And while the devil is not the cause of every sickness and affliction, it is also true that we are (literally) involved in a spiritual battle that is more important than what we can 'see'**

- **Jesus came to contest the ground**
- **He brought forth the kingdom of God through**
    - **Preaching reconciliation with the Father and through**
    - **Demonstrations of the kingdom through healing, the casting out of demons, and miracles**

- ***As soon as* He stepped ashore, Jesus was confronted by the demon who inhabited this man, for the ground belonged to Satan**
- **But 'greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world' (1 John 4:4), and the holiness of Jesus has far more power than the until-now uncontested power of demons**
- **In fact, Jesus begins to cast out the demon immediately upon stepping on the shore**
- **How does one do this?**
    - **First, you must speak to the demon (in this case many, or 'legion')**
    - **Second, you must rebuke the demon(s) in the name and by the power of the blood of Jesus**
    - **Third, you must command the demon(s) to leave, preferably to go to Jesus (who will know what to do with it/them)**

- **The demons in this case knew that Jesus had more power than they, so they began to negotiate with our Lord. They wanted to go into the swine because they did not want to go back to the 'abyss.' Think of the abyss as the large hall where people wait for work, but also a place where you are picked on by higher and more cruel beings just because they can - if you are a demon, you really want whatever work you can get so you don't have to go back there. Indicating that the human was of more value than the (ritually unclean pigs), Jesus allowed the demons to leave, but as we see, the pigs capacity for tolerating the foreign entities was low and they were driven wild by the presence of the demons.**

- **The townspeople in this story amaze me. They come to the scene and see a man they knew, for he was from their town. They had dedicated resources (guards, chains) to keep him isolated. This man they knew was not dressed and in his right mind, whole again. Instead of rejoicing, they ask Jesus to leave their region. Why?**
    - **Perhaps the economic loss they suffered angered them**
    - **But perhaps they had grown so used to the presence of evil that they pushed away holiness … and are we more like or unlike these townspeople?**

- **The man who is now whole, now able to approximate the image of God in which he was created (as we all are), asks Jesus if he can follow him as a demonstration of the power of the kingdom of God. But Jesus says no - return home and re-enter your life. But not as you were before but now, as a changed and transformed man.**

- **And that I believe is the word to the rest of us, that we are to re-enter our lives as changed people, people who now know that we are in a spiritual battle. We are now people who know that we have been given authority and power to do just as Jesus did. So we are urged to re-enter our lives transformed. I pray we will.**

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